The Pacific & Eastern Railroad Through Eagle Point To Butte Falls, Oregon 1905-1962

Courtesy Southern Oregon Historical Society # 4768

Eagle Point Historical Society: March 1997 $1.50

Time Capsule

The dedication of our new addition to the museum, and the burying of our time capsule, took place March 1, 1997. Gene Gross of Highway Products built the capsule. It is a large stainless steel box, two feet high by 12 inches square. Gene welded the top shut and filled the inside with Argon, an inert gas.

Billy Frazier used a backhoe to dig the hole. The concrete pipe was donated by LTM concrete and Don Hanscom of Jolly Rock donated the rock. Items in the capsule include: Independent newspaper Jan. 7, 1997 flood issue; Letter "E" from Eagle Point High School; 1997 Eagle Point team football poster; museum hat, tee-shirt & cup, golf ball from Eagle Point Golf Course; notes from students of Mrs. Kennedy's class; Glen D. Hale School, visor hat & calendar book from Eagle Thrift Market; library card from Eagle Point Library; small magnet Wood home Hwy. 62; photo Antelope Covered bridge; menu Antonio's Italian Restaurant; Fiber Optic cable from Sprint Telephone Co.; Western Bank history book; Four Eagle Point Historical Society newsletters; Eagle Point Historical Society list of current members; advertisement Eagle Point Mini-Storage and story by LaVar HanSen; Serendipity brochure of old bank building; Medford Mail Tribune article about Eagle Point Grange; Eagle Point Grange No. 664 membership ribbon, Deed & Land description and photo of Ernest & Grace Dahack (who donated the land for the museum); signed scroll with names; two books by Barbara Hegne: Settling The Rogue Valley & A Journey Back; brochures and laser scope from Asante Health Systems; Items from Gene Gros Highway Products; brochures and nails from the Butte Creek Mill; flyer advertising 1997 All School Eagle Point class reunion; McDonald happy meal box & toy from Katy Stanek's collection. From the museum collection we have placed an old pair of eyeglasses, postage stamps of James Dean & Marilyn Monroe and the March 9, 1945 Yank Magazine.

Capsule Items

The items in the capsule have been sprayed with a special deacidification spray which neutralizes the acids in documents, posters, maps, prints and other works of art on paper. The spray impregnates the paper, neutralizes acids, and leaves behind a buffer to absorb migrating acids from other sources. It also prevents paper items from turning yellow. All items are then placed in acid free polyethylene bags to further protect them. Two of our youngest members will be in charge of opening the capsule in 2057, Cody Seth Frazier age two and Taylor Wolgamott age 9 months.

The following business contributed to the Funding of the capsule and plaque: Pacific Power, Sprint, Western Bank, Eagle Point Mini-storage, Eagle Point Golf Course, Asante Health System, Eagle Point Thrift Market, Antonio's Italian Restaurant, Milliards Eagle Point Hardware. In kind services from: Gene Gros, Highway Products; Billie Frazier Excavation; Don Hanscom Jolly Rock and LTM Concrete.

The Eagle Point All School Reunion will be held Saturday March 15, 1997 Noon to 3 PM at J. J. North's Grand Buffet, Medford.

Last year over 100 people attended this event. We are planning to set up a table for picture albums. Bring your album full of memories. Be sure to have your name in the front of the album. The Eagle Point Historical Society will put their school photos, Eagle Point Quills, and school annuals on display.

The Eagle Point Historical Society & Museum will be open Saturday from 10 AM to 4 PM with special tours for the school reunion group. The museum is the second largest in Jackson County. We are located on North Royal, in the Eagle Point Historic District, between the Antelope Covered Bridge and the Butte Creek Mill.

For further Information call: Area Code %41:

Helen Wolgamott: 830-4049, Dorothey McDougall: 826-4157, Bill Carlson: 664-4853, Chris Meyer: 826-3211, Doris Grosch: 779-9086

Does anyone remember the old tennis court on Little Butte Creek next to the bridge?

The Pacific & Eastern Railroad Through Eagle Point To Butte Falls, Oregon.

By Barbara Morehouse Hegne

This material was excerpted from Barbara Hegne's book by the same title. The more detailed, 30 page book, is available at the Eagle Point Historical Society.

The railroad survey to Eagle Point in 1904 brought hope and visions of a great future for that small village. The railway, called the Medford & Crater Lake Railroad, was funded in part, with subscriptions from local Jackson County citizens.The newspaper told of the plans: "The time which has been looked forward to for many years by our most progressive citizens has at last arrived. The vast forests of the Cascades are to be reached by a railroad, and the immense timber wealth, which has been going to waste for the past two decades is to be utilized and become part of the varied resources of southern Oregon.

"To Medford, as the starting point of this railroad, will come the trade to the extensive region through which the road passes—trade which is now often diverted to other towns—and this city will within the next few years fulfill her manifest destiny as the largest and most prosperous municipality in Southern Oregon."

The citizens of Eagle Point knew their town would grow and prosper with the coming of the railway. However, this was just the beginning, there was a big job ahead building tracks across brush, sticky mud, streams, hills, and desert through unpredictable weather. One major job was building the railroad bridges over Bear Creek and Little Butte Creek. Jason Hartman, the well known bridge builder, won the contract to build both bridges. The paper reported: "The material is nearly all on the ground.The bridge across Bear creek will be 500 feet in length, one eighty foot span and the rest of the distance will be trestling. The Little Butte Creek bridge will be between 600 and 700 feet in length and there will be two eighty foot spans. The switch, onto the Southern Pacific line, has been surveyed and just as soon as the Southern Pacific gets its new rails laid past Medford, the switch will be graded and put in."

"The right of way men have cleared the brush and trees out of the way from Eagle Point to the desert (White City) and the pile drivers are at work driving the piling for the railroad bridge across Butte Creek. The teamsters have had a hard time drawing out the material for the bridge, as the continued rains have kept the roads so muddy that it took four horses to draw a two horse load, but the contractors and sub contractors are pushing the work along and we will have a railroad in spite of the rain and mud."

Bert Harris, a timber cruiser for a Michigan timber company, was the first person to visualize a railroad to Butte Falls. Arriving in the Big Butte country in the summer of 1903, he saw some of the finest forests of yellow and sugar pine found anywhere in the United States. He immediately set about purchasing timber land. Harris organized the Southern Oregon Development company, consisting of himself, a Mr. Parkhurst, and other eastern parties, and secured a right of way to build a railroad from Medford to the falls. Mr. Parkhurst died unexpectedly and Harris turned the right of way franchise over to some local investors, and the Medford & Crater Lake Railroad company was formed.

An agreement to build the railroad was signed March 13, 1905, with bank president A. A. Davis. A gala ground-breaking ceremony took place April 4th. The

Medford School Band performed and between 3,000 and 4,000 people attended the event. However, the ink was barely dry when there was a change in the business management of the company. In July, 1905, Walter Parsons, one of the civil engineers, came to Eagle Point to settled up all bills against the railroad. He told the citizens the work would be "pushed on with more rapidity" as they expected to extend the road beyond Eagle Point in the fall.

Besides reaching the extensive timber belt of the Butte Falls area, there was the thought of the line being extended north to Prospect and on toward Crater Lake, then eastward into Eastern Oregon.

Working crews of Hindus from India were contracted to build the railroad. In the 1910 census, there were 16 Hindus constructing the railroad in the Eagle Point camp. They all had the last name Singh. Most were single men between the ages of 20 and 60. The local people called them "Rag Heads". Nevah Taylor, a young Eagle Point girl, wrote that the "Rag Heads" would come to their farm for eggs, butter and milk, and that it was difficult to deal with them because they could not speak one word of English.

By September, 1905, the railroad bridge across Little Butte Creek was nearly completed and the grading for the depot in Peter Simon's field was done.

First Train To Eagle Point.

At 2 PM December 6, 1905, the first train from Medford on the Medford Crater Lake Railway arrived in Eagle Point. The town showed up in mass. The dignitaries of the railroad arrived, gave their speeches, and the citizens enjoyed a free ride. On December 9th, a gasoline motor car came over the railway, then winter weather stopped the trains.)

A shortage of money and building problems haunted the railroad, but on June 27, 1906 the trains started running. James Fryer, an Eagle Point pioneer of 1853, wrote of the event. "Up early took flowers and cherries to the train, a big turn out, the band was out and they give the folks of Eagle Point a free ride to Medford and back...had a gay time, got home at 1/2 past 4."

In July 1907, J. J. Fryer made a note of a big excursion of people from Jacksonville and Medford. The Eagle Point band played and things were "quite lively." Later he went to see the train on Dec. 10, 1907, " I was over the creek to see train, see them unload a car of household goods. It had...farm supplies, chickens, geese. It came from the Dallas."

More money problems and changes in ownership again plagued the railroad. Bert Harris began negotiating with Mr. Dewing of Michigan, who also owned large tracts of timber near Butte Falls, to invest in the railroad. Dewing built the Butte Falls Sugar Pine Lumber company, on the site of Butte Creek falls. Then he laid out the town site of Butte Falls on a flat above the falls. Harris and Dewing had a falling out and Harris took up other businesses for himself.

The local investors held onto the railroad and changed the name from Medford Crater Lake Railroad to Pacific & Eastern Railroad. In 1907, the railroad was thrown into a receiver's hands when the OregonTrust & Savings bank of Portland failed. The rail lay dormant for some time. In May, 1909 the newspaper reported that John R. Allen & Associates of New York City, had purchased the Pacific & Eastern Railroad. This company was connected with Robert S. Towne, the multi-millionaire copper operator

and the owner of the Blue Ledge Mine on the Siskiyous.They also planned to bring a rail line to the Blue Ledge district from Medford.

When the railroad work toward Butte Falls began in 1909, it created a lot of activity and jobs in Eagle Point. J. J. Fryer wrote: "I was at the depot, lots of business going on, side tracks full of cars, they run the cars nearly to the desert. The pipe camp pulled up and left, they got all the pipe hauled."

The giant steam shovel could be heard in town as it pulled and scraped a trail for the tracks toward Butte Falls. Local men; Ben Brophy, James Fryer and some of the Mathews, were paid $4.00 a day to work with their team of horses.The ground was wet and muddy and the task of preparing the road-bed and cutting trees was slow.

New people began moving into Eagle Point in 1908, then when the railroad changed hands in 1909, building and businesses increased. Eagle Point was incorporated in 1911 and the business section moved toward the railroad. Fryer's journal notes that by 1911 there were three brick stores (bank, hardware & merchandise store), a big hotel and saloon (Vogeli's), new depot, lumber yard, blacksmith shop (Childreth), livery stable (Harnish), a confectionery & ice cream & billiard hall (Lewis) and several new homes.

It was a tremendous undertaking to build the railroad through the mountains and canyons to Butte Falls. Nine gigantic skyscraper wooden trestles numbering 14 to 22, and six smaller ones, had to be constructed. The trestles were built on site and hoisted into place with a steam donkey engine.

"Halley's Comet".

John R. Allen, president of the P & E, announced that he planned to move the town of Eagle Point some two miles north to higher land and make the new town the "Halley's Comet" on the map of Jackson county. He claimed the problem with the present depot location was the "black sticky", and the small creek that traversed the depot station grounds. Allen believed the higher elevation would be more suited. He said the new location would use a 'Helper engine'. He projected the light and power for the new town could be generated in the old Holmes flouring mill and that water for drinking purposes could be brought by gravity from a large springs near the new location and that other water could be obtained from Little Butte Creek, or from the Bradshaw Drop of the Fish Lake Ditch company.

Allen told a newspaper reporter: "...the change in location would save four miles every trip." He continued: "I then began buying land for the establishment of the new town of Eagle Point. Osgood & Cummings will begin next week to survey and plat it. All those who may wish to move from the old to the new town of Eagle Point will be given lots free of cost. We will also give free lots for churches and schools, and all who, for old times' sake or other reasons prefer to remain should not feel they have been abandoned, because I will run my electric road to the old town if engineering problems will permit. I have never engaged in destructive business methods and do not propose to begin at this late date. In order to obtain the enormous amounts of money necessary for my enterprises I long ago learned that to be successful I must do the greatest good for the greatest number, and this what is being done relative to Eagle Point's new depot."

Allen established a lumber yard and set up brick kilns, then began a vigorous

campaign to entice the citizens to move. The Sam's Valley residents were very interested and hoped for a much needed county bridge across the Rogue River for easy access to the railroad.

With all of Allen's free-land plans and promises for a better town, the majority of Eagle Point citizens did not want to move. They circulated a petition against the proposal, and it worked. The move to the "new town" was abandoned and a new railroad depot was built north of the old temporary depot located in Peter Simon's field. A huge 90 by 120 foot building was constructed. It had a freight room and two waiting rooms, "one for the ladies and one for men, so that the men who want to can smoke and talk without being embarrassed by the ladies, and the ladies will not be annoyed by the smoking etc., of the men." There was a ticket sellers' window in each room' two rooms for the living quarters of the agent.

The railroad company laid track north of the depot for the passing track. They also purchased a 30 foot strip between the road and the creek off Fryer's land to lay pipe for the water system to a gigantic water tower. They laid a concrete foundation four feet thick for the engine house and installed a 10-horse gasoline engine to pump and force the water into the tank. The tank held 50,000 gallons of water.

After the track to Butte Falls was completed, the survey was pushed ahead to Willow Creek Summit, on to Rocky Point on Upper Klamath Lake, Fort Klamath and Klamath Falls. Along this line several giant trestles would have to be constructed. In 1910, a fire on Cat Hill above Butte Falls delayed the survey crew. Then the depression of that year put a stop to any railroad building above the town.

A trial run of the P & E to Butte Falls took place on March 11, 1911. The train went over the tracks, stayed the night and came back the next morning. Then on April 9, 1911, the first excursion train to Butte Falls went through. The people expected, since the track was new, that the trip would be uncomfortable, but they reported the trip pleasant and that the coaches sped over the rails easily. The train, composed of the engine, and the two coaches, left Medford at 8:14 a. m. and arrived at Butte Falls 11 a. m. One hundred seven tickets were sold and no one was allowed to board the cars who could not be seated. Many were turned away who had waited until the last minute to get tickets.

When they arrived in Butte Falls, the passengers spread out over the small community. Some went to see the falls, then they all had a fried chicken dinner at the Butte Falls United States Hotel. The trip was a tremendous success and excursions were planned to run every Sunday. However, on April 16th the next excursion went through with "not many" aboard

In June 1910, John Allen began selling their shares of railroad right of way lands to James H. Hill owner of the Great Northern Line. In April 1911, the P & E main office assured the public they planned to continue the line to Klamath Falls to join the Oregon Trunk railway and make it one line. President, William Gerig reported: "The Pacific & Eastern has been surveyed and located to the Narrows near the head of Klamath Falls and passed over the divide with an elevation of 5300 feet, on a maximum grade of 3 per cent.The average grade being about 2 percent. The greatest curve is a 10 degree."

The Oregon Trunk route was proposed to go from, "The Dalles, up the Des Chutes valley, paralleling the Des Chutes river in many places, then passing through

Madras, Redmond, Laidlaw, Bend, La Pine and Crescent, then along the west slope of Walker range, skirting the western portion of the Klamath reservation, passing the north end of upper Klamath lake, then in a westerly direction passing Mount Pitt, to Butte Falls, which makes the tie between Medford and Portland on the Hill system." The plans were ready, but the funding was not forth coming.

Butte Falls was a favorite camping ground for people of the valley to escape the summertime heat. The new railroad schedule advertised that: "Families can now camp in the woods during the summer and the business men can leave Medford at 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, spend Sunday with the family and be back in Medford by 10 O'clock Monday morning. "The new changes in the train schedule planned to leave Medford daily at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and lay over night at Butte Falls. Then leave at 7 o'clock in the morning and reach Medford at 10 a. m. The train would double back as far as Eagle Point and be back in Medford in time for the trip in the afternoon to the Falls. This would allow Butte Falls people to come to Medford and spend the day shopping or visiting and return home the same day.

The Pacific & Eastern tried various events to keep the railroad running. One such idea was the forming of the P & E baseball team. They played Butte Falls July 30, 1911. They advertised "The Pacific & Eastern has been strengthened by Southern Pacific players and a good game is promised. No admission to game.

"The trip to Butte Falls is scenic one through the mountains and affords a pleasant day's outing.Take your lunches and enjoy yourself. Good fishing in Little Butte. Round trip $1.00

Eagle Point continued to grow and the area was producing some of the finest fruit in the valley. It was boasted that Eagle Point would be a major shipping point between Sam's Valley, Antelope Valley, upper Rogue and Butte Falls.

"Eagle Point and the country tributary to the town are the first beneficiaries of the Hill system of railroads in Oregon, the town having been selected as the helper station, the location for the railroad shops and round houses, etc., and ultimately will be the division town, when the Pacific & Eastern road is extended to a connection with the Oregon Trunk line, now terminating at Bend, Oreg. By a little more than a 2 percent grade the Cascade mountains will be passed from Eagle Point, and with the wonderful development in timber industries and fruit growing in the district, there can be no question that the tonnage tributary to Eagle Point will one day be equal to that of any town on the Hill system in Oregon."

The Bradshaw orchard near Brownsboro was famous for their winning Newtown apples, and the Tronson-Guthrie apples won the sweepstake prize at the Spokane apple show in 1909. They became known as the"apple kings of America". In addition giant onions were raised south of town and Eagle Point became known as the "Onion Capitol". The tonnage shown in 11 months' statistics on the P & E railroad's books having been consigned to Eagle Point merchants was more than 7,500,000 pounds of freight.

Derby station, located about mid-way between Eagle Point and Butte Falls, was a main station and Post Office. Derby also had a school nearby and a store.

The Popularity of The Automobile and the Decline of the Passenger Train

The month of May, 1917, was the banner period in all history for the sale and delivery of new automobiles in Oregon. As of that date 38,000 automobiles had been registered in Oregon. It was noted that the motor car surpassed the railroad in the carrying of passengers. The popularity and availability of the automobile greatly decreased passenger traffic and finances to the railroad.

The P & E put tires on a car and transported people and mail along the rail. The railroad officials realized it was too costly to extend the railroad to Klamath and the idea was abandoned. In 1920, the P & E was sold to James Brownlee, who became partners with Millard Olds, and an industrious timber adventure was born. The old passenger train became a logging train.

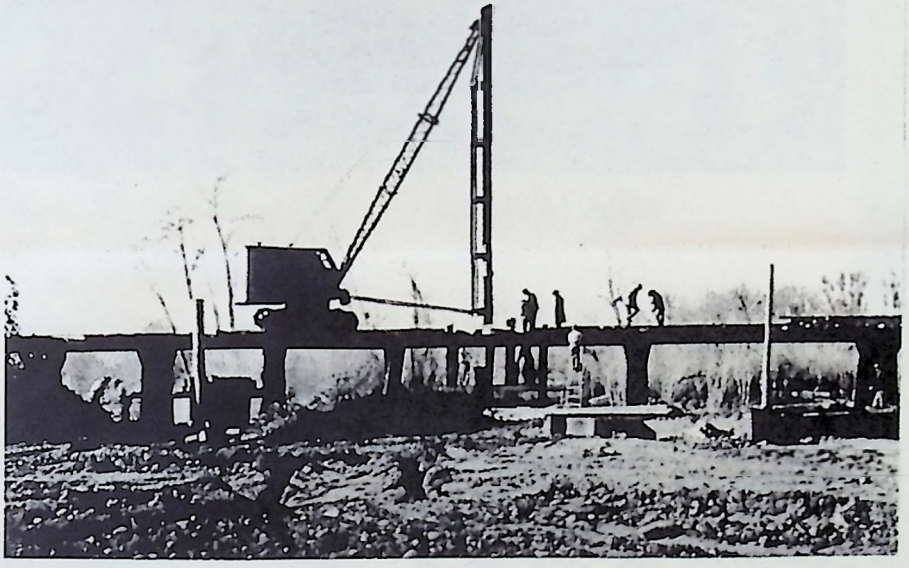
The Brownley-Olds partnership was short lived with Olds selling his share to Brownley. In 1924, James S. Owen incorporated, (Owen-Oregon), purchased the holdings of Brownlee. During the Wall Street stock market crash of 1929, Owen-Oregon's production slipped to an all time low. The worker's jobs were cut and the bills piled up. Financial problems plagued the Owen-Oregon Company the next few years. Medford Corporation (MEDCO) became involved in the management of Owen-Oregon, and in 1935, took over the company. The old Pacific Eastern Railway became Medco.

Medco extended the railroad beyond Butte Falls and had many miles of railroad spurs into the back woods. Their main line went north to the old Daley place where they built the Medco logging pond

In 1948, Pete Burg was the engineer on the Medco train. He said there were 10 or 11 trestles between Eagle Point and Butte Falls. "When we crossed them, they made a horrible racket. Later, because of train wrecks, they double tracked the trestle rails. The logs would fall off the train all along the track and once a year or so the McGiffert would go along and pick up the logs.

"Many times when the train came through Eagle Point and had to climb what they called "Pruett Hill", if it was frosty, they had to call for a helper train.

"I got drafted in 1951 and got put in the Virginia Transportation Corp. They trained us for several months on what we already knew. When I got out of the service in 1953, I worked as engineer on the Medco again. I could see the writing on the wall. The company began phasing down because of the log truck industry. Reloading was too costly for the trucks to unload at the train and have the train take the load. It was just easier to have the trucks haul the load all the way. I left in 1954 and went into logging." The railroad logging closed in 1962.



Top left: Train through Eagle Point, Oregon. Mill on right is the Tom McGraw-Frank Childers mill built in 1937.
Top right: steam shovel used to build railroad. (courtesy Gordon Stanley).
Center: Railroad bridge across Little Butte Creek about 1/4 mile up Nick Young Road. (Courtesy Southern Oregon Historical Society # 4752).
Bottom: Hindus building the railroad near Eagle Point.

"Railroad Days" Event Planned For The Eagle Point Historical Society & Museum March 16th-to March 22nd Every Afternoon From noon to 4pm and Saturday 10 am to 4pm

Listen for the train whistles and the chug of the engine. Don't miss this exciting event celebrating the old Pacific & Eastern railroad that used to run through Eagle Point. A large depot used to sit near where Eagle Thrift Market is today, and the railroad was a major shipping point for our farmers and merchants.

Come and see Ken Beebe's railroad items he donated to the museum. Listen to the sounds of the steam engines and the music of the railroad.

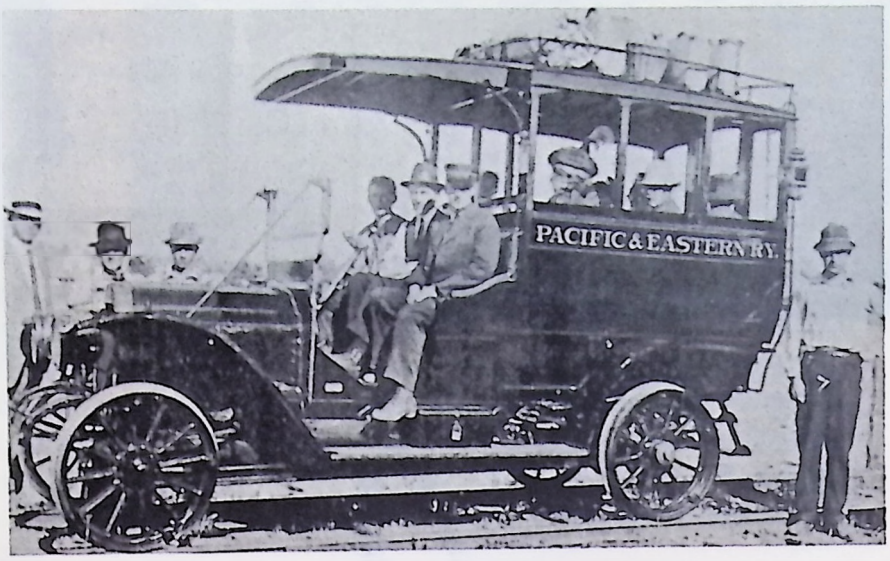
Ken put together a small train that will be running its course through a small village just like Eagle Point.

See how a railroad depot telegraph-phone system works.

Do you know how the engineer picked up his messages?

Do you know what a Flimsie is?

Bring your group. For more information call Barbara Hegne 8264166 or 826-9725



Top: Pacific & Eastern car put on rails during World War I.
Bottom: Excursion Train To Butte Falls.
Courtesy Southern Oregon HistoricalSociety # 10565

New Members to Welcome:

Joan Holland, Bob & Nellie Sanderson, John & Caroline Jarawski, Millard's Eagle Point Hardware, Deborah Kostal, John Stanley, Katy Stanek, Harvey Graham, Earlene Miller, James Jackson, Rosie Short (lifetime member).

Membership count and community support are both criteria of interest to the Jackson County commissioneers when they dispurse historical funds to historical organizations. please be a supporting member and bring the money back home.

Our membership has increased from 293 to 425 this past year. We thank everyone for keeping current and encouraging friends to join.

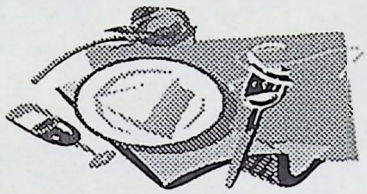
Volunteers are always needed and welcome at our society. If you have a few hours you would like to donate to the museum just let us know.

New Purchases

We have purchased a tape deck recorder with turntable and disc player so we can make recordings and play them. Larry purchased an outside dusk to dawn light and installed it outside our exit door. It lights the entire parking lot.

Meetings, Fun and Refreshments Are In Order

You are invited to attend our monthly meetings held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7pm. After each meeting, refreshments are served. Come join us in planning the historical future of Eagle Point Historical Society & Museum. You do not have to be a member to attend.



Donations

Ken & Barbara Beebe: more railroad items plus the purchase of a large desk which has been turned into a railroad depot, a working train engine and rails, book case with books on litigations against the Southern Pacific railroad, oak entertainment cabinet, plus a television to use with our VCR system. In honor of Henry & Larry Nelson, a large oil painting of the Antelope Covered bridge, painted in 1955 before it was moved to Eagle Point.

Board Members

Don Reynolds, President
Wayne Jackson, Vice President
Larry Vaughn, Treasurer
Carol Reynolds, Secretary

Board Members:

Helen Wolgamott
Ernie Redington
Walt Barker
Barbara Hegne, Curator

Committees:

Virginia Cutler, History News
Sharon Barker, Volunteers
Betty Bedingfield, Parliamentarian
Norma Kuyper & Don Reynolds, Cemetery
Helen Wolgamott & Gerry Craver, Grounds
Amy Dawson, Hostess
Barbara Hegne, Membership

Staff Volunteers

Don Reynolds
Beryl Hickson
Arlene Hoffman
Midge Harnish
Helen Wolgamott
Sharon Barker
Virginia Cutler
Sally Corriveau
Carol Reynolds
Mazie Neece
Walt Barker
Inita Kaiser
Ernie Redington
Tina Redington

Volunteer Helpers

Julie Lee
Gerry Craver
Joyce & Sam Bloomquist
Everett Jennings
Lynn Helgedalen

Employees

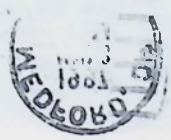
Barbara Hegne
Katy Stanek

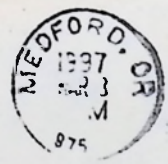
Membership:
Teens $5.00
Single $7.50
Husband & Wife $12.50
Business $10
Lifetime $100

Winter Hours:
Tues. Thurs. Fri. & Sunday
Noon to 4pm
Saturday 10am to 4pm.
We will gladly open other hours with sufficient notice. Call Barbara 826-9725 or Museum 826-4166

We are located in the historic district of Eagle Point Oregon, between the Old Antelope covered Bridge and the Butte Creek Mill on North Royal.

Join Our Family Tree





Eagle Point Historical Society
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